

Approved For Release 2006/09/28 : CIA-RDP84-00780R006700070020-2

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 29 July 1975
TO: DDA (Mr. Blake)		
ROOM NO. 7D26	BUILDING Hq	
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File Speeches

Speech by

Lt. General Vernon A. Walters

to

Atlanta Rotary

Atlanta, Georgia

July 7, 1975

I am glad to be in Atlanta and to have the opportunity to speak to you here today on matters close to my heart. A number of the members of my family live here and when I was about to graduate from Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning in 1942 I came up here to buy my Sam Browne belt, and before I graduated it had been removed from the uniforms of the Army. I was earning \$120 a month at that time and it represented a serious investment. It never did me any good; I took it out a couple of days ago--it won't fit any more.

But I do want to talk to you a little bit about something which is receiving a great deal of publicity right now and that is the question of intelligence.

Intelligence is vital to the United States if we are to survive as a free and democratic society. It is not immoral. There is a great effort abroad today to make you think there is something shady or unpleasant or nasty or immoral in intelligence, and particularly that the Founding Fathers felt this way. Well, let me just read you what The Founding Father, George Washington, had to say about this. "The necessity," and I quote him, "the necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need

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not be further urged. All that remains for me to add is that you keep the whole matter as secret as possible. For upon secrecy depends in most matters of the kind, and for want of it they are generally defeated however well planned and promising of a favourable outlook." That was the letter from George Washington to Colonel Elias Drayton who was the chief of his intelligence in the State of New Jersey.

We can come down more recently to President Harry Truman who said, "Whether it be treason or not," and I quote him, "it does the United States just as much harm for military secrets to be made known to potential enemies through open publication as it does for military secrets to be given to the enemy through the clandestine operation of spies. I do not believe that the best solution can be reached by going on the basis that every one has the right to know all of our military secrets and information affecting the national security."

These are two Presidents of the United States separated by a great deal of time and the idea that you can tell everybody everything is just not an idea that was held by those who have been responsible over long periods of time for the destiny of our country.

What is intelligence? Intelligence is vital information of a political, military, technical and economic nature that bears upon the security of our country. It is this information properly collected, analyzed, evaluated, and disseminated to those who have to make the decisions concerning the future of

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our country. Now why do we need it? Well, we need it because we live in a world in which everything is not perfect yet. At the present time the Soviet Union is in the course of deploying four new systems of ICBMs--third generation ICBMs --intercontinental ballistic missiles. We see evidence of a fifth one appearing. They are building newer, larger, more effective submarines that can launch missiles from the harbors in the Soviet Union to the vital centers of the United States. They are building a new bomber that could be used against the continental United States. They are tremendously building up their conventional forces in Europe and elsewhere.

We have China doing some of the same things--not quite in the same state of advancement as the Soviet Union, and, in fact, not just these two countries, but one of the things we may have to keep track of as the result of the fall of South Vietnam is that a number of countries that used to trust the American guarantee may no longer do so and they may feel their only answer for their own protection is to develop some sort of nuclear weapon. So we have the constant danger around the world of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We no longer have the oceans that provided us weeks or months of security while we could get ready to face any threat that came against us.

Now, how do we go about collecting this intelligence? There are several ways. First of all there is overt intelligence which is intelligence that you can get from newspapers, which you can get from open publications of all sorts, which you can get from public statements of all sorts, and one of the things that Mr. Colby often says is the difference between him and Mr. Andropov, who is the head of the Soviet intelligence service, is that we have a few crumbs to go on and we have to try to do what we can, whereas Mr. Andropov is absolutely submerged under an avalanche of information about the United States and he has to try and pick out what he thinks is real and what he thinks is false.

So we have a somewhat different problem on that.

We have technical means of collection and I think one of the great contributions the United States has brought to intelligence has been the application of technology to the collection of intelligence. Fifteen years ago in the United States we had a great debate about whether or not there was a missile gap between the Soviet Union and the United States. You couldn't have such a gap today. We have the means of knowing whether there are or what missiles the Soviets have, how many they have and so forth.

And one of the extraordinary things we have done in all areas is the collection of technical intelligence.

And then you have human intelligence. Now, technology is great and will do a lot of things for you. For instance, at the time of the war between Israel and the Arabs, we knew perfectly well what the forces were that were in presence, but no technology will give you access to the means of decisions-- to what goes on in somebody's head or what goes on inside a building. For this you have to have people, devoted and dedicated people, who will work to obtain this essential intelligence for you.

Now we have outside the CIA a statue of Nathan Hale. I was not consulted on this statue or I am afraid I would have disagreed. He was a very gallant and a very brave man, but he was a spy who was caught on his first mission and he had all the evidence on him. I am not sure this is what we want, but anyway, why did the Central Intelligence Agency, of which I have the honor to be the Deputy Director, come into being? Well, we had a great investigation in 1945 and 1946 that lasted seven months and it was filled with recriminations about Pearl Harbor. One of the things that came out of that investigation was that it was perfectly clear that in various parts of the U.S. Government, we had the information that could have told us what was going to happen. But everybody--the Army, the Navy, the FBI, and everybody else was squirreling away their little private piece of information and not sharing it with anybody. If we'd had the ability to put all of this

together and have someone present this to the President, it might have saved us a great deal at Pearl Harbor. So President Truman asked the Congress in 1947 to set up a Central Intelligence Agency. The word "central" was used because it was to be a central repository from all sources. This intelligence agency was created by the National Security Act of 1947 and in it was provided for Congressional oversight of the intelligence agency by the Congress. Specifically, because it was created under the National Security Act, the oversight committees were to be the Armed Services Committees of House and Senate. But, because we need money, the Appropriations Committees also were part of our oversight committees.

Now, the Congress has determined--there has been a great deal of criticism of the oversight and the degree and so forth in which it was exercised. We did not set the oversight. We have told the Congress that we could live with any kind of oversight that they want to have. We have told our oversight committees everything--we do not have any secrets from our oversight committees. And we have never had any leaks from our oversight committees. So this has not presented a security problem for us. But, again, I repeat, whatever comes out of this investigation in the way of oversight, we can live with. Any form that Congress chooses to set for the proper oversight, we can live with; it is up to Congress to determine what kind of oversight they want to have.

Now this principle of Congressional oversight of the intelligence service is a uniquely American principle. No other country in the world has it, except the West Germans and they may have got it from us after World War II. It is a healthy principle providing it is done in a constructive, responsible way and not used as a football--a political football. Intelligence is too precious to be used as a political football. We are now embarked on a series of investigations to determine whether any great nation can run its secret intelligence service, so to speak, in a goldfish bowl. Now we may be able to because we are a very unusual nation; but if we do, it will be just like going to the moon--we'll have been the only ones who did it.

We hope that these investigations will result in the Congress giving us guidelines as to what is acceptable. We hope at the same time they will provide a mechanism for changing those guidelines as what is acceptable changes.

What we are talking about and what all these charges that you're hearing about, in great part, refer to events that took place 15 or 20 years ago. And they are not acceptable by some people by the standards of today. Just as today you cannot run segregated schools, in 1935 you could. And in 1925 you would probably have been in trouble for trying to operate anything but. So whatever guidelines the Congress gives us--that they want us to abide by--we hope they will provide for some mechanism so somebody in an investigation in 1990 doesn't say, "What were those horrible things you were doing or not

doing--which I think is more likely--back in 1975? We can live with any guidelines that they want to give us. We only want to have some mechanism of change so that we will know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Times change.

At the time when people were talking about Fidel Castro, he was shooting people in the national stadium, in front of the television cameras. We've had people tell us that if only someone could have done something about Hitler before 1940, how many lives would have been saved. If somebody had done something to Hitler during World War II, they would probably have been the first recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Victoria Cross. So as these perceptions change, we hope that there will be built in to whatever oversight there is something that will indicate to us as the perception changes of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Certainly we have done some things that we should not have. If any other Federal agency was subjected to the kind of scrutiny over the last 28 years that we have, I am sure you would find some things that were wrong. Some of you who have large corporations know that in the corporation things go wrong or things occur that you would not wish to occur. Yes, we've had some people who have shown excessive zeal. But I

submit that if you take any kind of a proportionate count of these things, they will be found to be very small in number.

After all, the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Colby, is the only person in the United States Government who is specifically, by law passed by both houses of Congress charged with the protection of his sources and methods. Yes, some of these things occurred, but I submit they were corrected long before we got to these investigations--back in the early 1970s.

On assassinations, the Director's position has been that it is not in the interest of the United States to point the finger at any one--inside or outside the Central Intelligence Agency. These were different circumstances. The Agency has been excluded from this. In 1972, Mr. Helms put out a directive and said assassination is not to be considered; it is not the policy of this Agency, and will not be resorted to. That was three years before these charges came up and were brought to us. Now the Rockefeller Committee has been used to list various of our misdeeds and so forth and so on, but there are some parts of the Rockefeller Committee Report that have not been as frequently quoted. Like the one on page ten where he says, and I quote, "The detailed analysis of the facts has convinced this Commission that the great majority of the CIA's domestic activities comply with its statutory authority." Or again where they said, and I quote, "The Agency's own actions undertaken for the most part in '73 or '74 have gone far to terminate the activities on which

this investigation has focused." We are spending nearly all of our time now investigating and answering charges on matters concerning the 50s and the 60s. I am concerned about the end of the 70s and the early 1980s because that's where the destiny and the future of the United States is going to be decided.

All too often we spend our time flagellating ourselves as a people, pointing out our own mistakes, pointing out our own shortcomings, pointing out all the terrible things we've done. Not long ago in Europe, the head of one of our friendly services said to me, "You know, I used to think that the penitentes and flagellantes were two small sects in New Mexico and Arizona, but I find you have large colonies of them all over the eastern and western seaboard." You know, we are always looking at our shortcomings.

Not long ago I was visiting in a Chinese museum and my guide was a little Chinese student and at the end she said to me, "What do you think of this?" I said, "Well, it is very interesting and leaves one thoughtful to contemplate the 6,000 years of your history alongside of the 200 years of our history." And she smiled, and said, "Yes, that is only half a dynasty, isn't it?" And I said, "Yes, but in that half a dynasty we went from a barren rock on the New England Coast to the silent face of the moon." We sometimes tend to forget as a people that with all our shortcomings, with all the wrongs in our society, that we have given a greater percentage of our people more of the good things of life and more opportunity and more vertical flexibility

than any other society man has evolved up to this time.

But one of the problems we face in the world today is the different form of war from what we have grown accustomed to. Two thousand five hundred years ago a Chinese writer called Sun Tzu wrote a book called The Art of War. Really it's a difficult book to read because it's in the form of a Chinese dialogue and it's something like swimming in a pool full of molasses, but you can distill it out to a number of commandments he gave. And he starts out with this general consideration: "Fighting is the crudest form of making war." And then he adds a series of commandments of how you undo your enemies. Now these were written 2,500 years ago and just listen. First, "Cover with ridicule everything that is valid in your opponent's country." Two, "Denounce their leaders and at the right time turn them over to the scorn of their fellow countrymen." Three, "Aggravate by every means at your command all existing differences within your opponent's country." Four, "Agitate the young against the old." There are thirteen of these and he closes it up with this general consideration: "The supreme excellence is not to win a hundred victories and a hundred battles. The supreme excellence is to subdue the armies of your enemies without having to fight them."

America cannot be defeated from the outside. America can only be defeated from the inside. America can be defeated

by being made to feel that her cause is unjustified. You all remember Vietnam, you all remember how agitated people were when that quote repressive government unquote of President Thieu used to suspend one of the five opposition newspapers in Saigon. That's not a problem any more. There are no more opposition newspapers in Saigon, nor are there any more Rotary Clubs in Saigon. So that was the alternative that some people preferred and convinced the large number of the American people that it was not worth trying to prevent this sort of thing.

You know, we Americans are a very unusual people. Again a story I heard recently in Europe and I heard it before the Mayaguez story--tells how a Frenchman, an Englishman and an American were captured on an island in the Pacific by cannibals and the cannibals informed them they would be executed and eaten the next day. So the cannibal chief said, "I'm going to give you one wish each before we take care of you." So he turned to the Frenchman and he said, "What do you want?" And the Frenchman said, "Well, if I'm going to be executed in the morning, I'd just as soon spend the remaining time with that beautiful cannibal girl over there." So they said, "Okay," and they untied the Frenchman and he and the cannibal girl went off into the woods. Then they said to the Englishman, "What do you want?" The Englishman said, "I want a pen and paper to write a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, to protest against the unjust, unfair and unsporting attitude

you have adopted towards us." (Laughter) So they untied the Englishman and they gave him a table where he could write in a hut. Then they turned to the American and they said, "What do you want?" And the American said, "Well, I want to be led into the middle of the village; I want to be made to kneel down and I want the biggest cannibal here to kick me in the rear end." The cannibal chief said, "Well, that's peculiar request, but the Americans are a peculiar people, and I promised." So they led the American into the middle of the village and they made him kneel down and the biggest cannibal there took a flying leap, kicked the American in the rear end and knocked him sprawling about 15 feet. Now the American had been hiding a sub-machine gun under his clothes and at this point he whipped out the sub-machine gun and cut down the cannibals. The Frenchman hearing the gunfire came out of the woods; the Englishman hearing the gunfire came out of the hut. They looked at the American and they said, "Do you mean to say you had that sub-machine gun the whole time?" And he said, "Yes." They said, "Why the heck didn't you use it before now?" And the American looked at them very earnestly and he said, "But you don't understand; it wasn't until he kicked me in the rear end that I had any moral justification." (Laughter and applause)

You know, you've got to live in the real world. We all hope that detente works and that it works in both directions. But another story I heard recently was about two young Americans who went to Moscow and they went to the zoo. And

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the young Russian was taking them around. He showed them the various animals in the cages: the Siberian sabre-tooth tiger, and all the other, and then finally brought them to a cage where they had a huge Russian bear with teeth that long and claws that long and in the same case was a rather worried-looking lamb. And the young American said, "Well, that's an odd couple to put in the same cage. Why do you put those two in the same cage?" And the Russian said, "This is to prove that peaceful coexistence is possible." The young American said, "Well, that's pretty impressive," and his buddy said, "It sure is, isn't it?" And the young Russian looked around and seeing no one, he said, "Of course, you understand, every morning we have to put in a new lamb!" As long as you don't run out of lambs you're in pretty good shape.

But I just want to say, I am not an old CIA man. I came there three years ago and people often ask me, "How do you feel about the CIA after three years?" And I must say sometimes I feel like Jonas, because it seems to me that all of this started about the time I came there. But I would say that I could sum up everything I feel about working at the Central Intelligence Agency with the word "reassurance." Reassurance at the competence that I have found there; reassurance at the continuity of people staying and working at the same thing over a long period of time. But mostly I am reassured by the people--by their integrity; by the fact that they are Americans who

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live by the same standards as other Americans; by the fact that they have to bear these accusations without any real effective means of answering. Not long ago I watched a television program on which a man stood up and said, "I used to work for the CIA and I was an employee of the CIA and I plotted the death of Fidel Castro. That man, whose name is Sturgis, has never at any time ever worked for the CIA. We called up the program manager before the show and told him this. It made no difference. It went on just the same way. The rebuttal never catches up with the accusation. There is no way you can ever catch up. An accusation is made, you can produce all kinds of proof and everything else, You never get it.

I submit that the people who work in intelligence have the same rights as other American citizens; the same right to the presumption of innocence as other American citizens--which is a fundamental part of our law. Frankly, they don't always get it.

With Defense Intelligence, with the FBI, we have tried to help to keep the United States a free and democratic society. We hope to continue to do that providing we are not crippled. We are condemned not by our own choice for fighting on the silent battlefield of intelligence. Every day when I go to work I walk into the building and on the right I see the stars that commemorate those men of the Central Intelligence Agency who fell on that silent battlefiel, unheralded, unknown by most, and honored by only a few. But those men laid down their

lives for your freedom and mine, just as much as anyone who died on the battlefield.

On the other side of the wall, at my office, is the motto of the Central Intelligence Agency, which is taken from the Bible, and it says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." I can't help but think that in the world in which we live and the kind of intelligence effort which is being made against the United States, the military threat which exists to the United States, that we perhaps ought to change that motto to read: "You must know the truth for only the truth will keep you free."

Outside Dr. Schlesinger's office, the Secretary of Defense, there is a painting with a motto on it which says--it's again a quotation from the Prophet Isaiah: "Whom shall I send; who will go for us." Well, in the years since the end of World War II, unknown and unheralded, the men of your Army, Navy, Air Force, Central Intelligence and FBI have answered steadfastly, and whenever called upon, "Here I am; send me."

We face a situation where the United States and its power relationships with the rest of the world is in the toughest situation since Valley Forge. The real issue at stake before us today is not the validity, or the falsehood, or the fact, of these accusations, many of which relate back 15 or 20 years. The real issue before us today is: Will the United States have eyes and ears? or will it stumble into the future? a blind and deaf giant until the day it has to choose between abject

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humiliation and nuclear blackmail; whether the United States will have the ability to see what is being done or what is not being done. That is the real issue that faces us today. Winston Churchill told my generation that we would have as our companion on our journey "blood, sweat, tears, and toil." I can only say that on the journey that all of us have before us if we are to remain a free and democratic society, I hope we have three companions: faith to light the dark road that lies ahead, for dark and lonely is the road of the man who walks without faith; enthusiasm which is the motor of all human activity, regardless of age; and finally, courage, which is the greatest virtue of all because it is the guarantee of all the other virtues. The courage to change what must be changed and the courage to maintain what must be maintained.

Thank you very much.